

School Enrollment Task Force Meeting  
Tuesday, February 23, 2016  
Arlington High School  
School Committee Room  
7:00 PM

**Present:** Kathleen Bodie, Superintendent of Schools  
Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager  
John Cole, Permanent Town Building Committee  
Joe Curro, Board of Selectman (absent)  
Charles Foscett, Capital Planning Committee  
William Hayner, School Committee  
Diane Mahon, Board of Selectman (absent)  
Cindy Starks, School Committee  
Jeff Thielman, School Committee  
Allan Tosti, Finance Committee

Also present: Lori Cowles, HMFH Architects

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

**Public Comments**

Consider the value that the ACA provides to Arlington, support Thompson expansion, and consider a study on the Gibbs, support for a facilities study.

**Discussion of Ottoson Middle School Space Needs**

Dr. Bodie stated that after weighing all of the possible options to address the enrollment increase at OMS her preference and recommendation is to use to the Gibbs School in some capacity. Options could include a town-wide sixth grade or a 6-8 middle school; however that will be decided at a later date by the School Committee. Supt. Bodie reviewed the handout 'Possible options to address the enrollment challenge at Ottoson'. Options studied:

- ◆ Build a new middle school on open land.
- ◆ 8<sup>th</sup> grade building or wing at AHS.
- ◆ Single middle school grade at Gibbs.
- ◆ 6-8 middle school at Gibbs.
- ◆ Convert Gibbs to a 5-7 or 5/6.
- ◆ Addition to OMS on existing School Department land.
- ◆ Addition to OMS on Crusher Lot.
- ◆ Permanent modular classrooms at Ottoson.

Mr. Chapdelaine stated that he has come full circle regarding the use of the Gibbs explaining that there is no other space/vacant lots in the Town to build another middle school, he does have sympathy for the tenants but agrees with Supt. Bodie that the Gibbs is the best option to address the middle school enrollment increase.

Dr. Bodie explained that each option presents with its own set of pros and cons, but that after analyzing all of the data believes that the following can be taken off of the table:

- ◆ 8<sup>th</sup> grade wing at AHS - MSBA would need to agree to an expanded high school project for reimbursement and would not be ready until September 2022.

- ◆ New middle school – no land, cost \$40-50 million, MSBA funding would be secondary to the high school.
- ◆ Addition to OMS on existing School Dept. land – is a complex site to build on, can incur costs to existing building, hard to predict impacts and costs, would be the largest middle school in the state.

The task force discussed the various options at length. Concerns with the Gibbs proposal include:

- ◆ Displacing tenants - Town Manager believes that ACA may be able to use existing town space. One member suggested creating a task force to help the Gibbs tenants secure new locations.
- ◆ Time estimates are unrealistically short for getting a reliable feasibility study from engineers in time to get the accurate numbers needed to know whether Gibbs renovation is feasible, only then could Gibbs tenants be notified that their leases would not be renewed on June 30.
- ◆ Not willing to take the expansion of the Ottoson off the table – a comparative analysis between the OMS expansion versus the Gibbs is needed.
- ◆ Concerns of convincing voters to approve such an expensive project with just preliminary cost figures combined with all the other ongoing school construction projects (High School, Minuteman, and Stratton). The Town must show that due diligence was taken to make an airtight case for voters to approve and to see that the Gibbs is the best option and not the only option considered; an in depth professional feasibility study of both the OMS expansion and the Gibbs renovation will accomplish that.

Mr. Hayner made a motion to instruct the Town Manager to have a feasibility study performed on the OMS and the Gibbs without consideration of a new school or moving grade 8 to Arlington High School. Motion withdrawn at the request of Mr. Cole.

On a motion by Mr. Tosti second by Mr. Hayner it was unanimously:

Voted to seek out a proposal that provides the scope of work necessary for the Ottoson Middle School expansion and the renovation of the Gibbs School.

### **Thompson Space Needs**

Supt. Bodie informed task force members that in order to meet the increasing enrollment needs at the Thompson School a six room addition will be necessary for September 2018. In order to accomplishment that ten months of construction beginning in November 2017 is needed. Not meeting that deadline will result in additional modulars which with four active modulars at that site will make construction near impossible. Dr. Bodie's recommendation is to build a six room permanent addition (approved by School Committee on December 17, 2015) at the Thompson School.

Mr. Tosti suggested that as a way to save time, that the Finance Committee and the School Department split the cost on the Ottoson Middle School modulars, on the studies for the OMS and Gibbs and the addition at the Thompson school (with the understanding that said funds would need to be replenished). The Superintendent and the Town Manager will work on the numbers and report back at the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 8, at 7:00 PM in the School Committee room.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Notes by Kathleen Bodie, Superintendent  
Submitted by  
Karen Tassone